

FREE

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THE GROUNDHOG

“Neighborly News from the Heart of Lookout Mountain”

MAY 2023



A Unique Discovery From Days Gone By

by Kelly Leavitt

A rare historic relic was recently discovered by Valley Head’s Harold Carden at the Hull Street cottage of John and Leigh Anne Montgomery. The Mentone home, said to have been built in 1911, has been undergoing significant restoration. Workers had been preparing an area to lay stones for a footpath when Harold noticed something unusual on the dirt surface. He was surprised to

learn it was a merchant token from Guy Burgess’s Mentone Store. Built in 1896, the store faced Cutler Avenue, back in the days when the narrow, tree-lined road was the main thoroughfare through Mentone. Burgess’s building was the original footprint of what became the Hitching Post, which was lost to fire on February 2. In the past, tokens were sometimes returned as change for purchases, perhaps due to coin shortages, particularly in rural areas. We know that by 1924, the Mentone Store was sold to its third owner, so the token

may date to the first two decades of the 20th century. One side reads “G. [?] BURGESS, MENTONE, ALA.” with a large number 5. The reverse reads “GOOD FOR 5¢ CENT DRINK.” It is made made of a lightweight metal and features a delicate design on a scalloped edge. I searched a catalog for Alabama tokens, and from the hundreds I saw, Mr. Burgess’s token has the most interesting design. A reminder for us all: If you’re outside working on your land and something catches your eye, it may well be worth investigating!



Sunset Socials Resume

Thursday, June 1 @ 7:15 p.m. • Brow Park, Mentone

Area residents are invited to gather for socializing while enjoying the sunset from Mentone’s Brow Park when Sunset Socials resume on June 1. They will be held on the first Thursday of each month through October. MAPA will provide plates, forks, cups, water, and name tags. Please feel free to share a dessert, snack, or beverage. The socials held last year were a lot of fun, and new and long-time residents enjoyed getting to know one another. We hope you’ll join us on June 1.



Photo courtesy of Mark Wallheiser

Free Concert

Will Dooley & Co.

Friday, May 19 • Mentone

See page 11 for details

31st Annual Wildflower Saturday at DeSoto State Park



Springtime at DeSoto State Park is truly beautiful, with wildflowers and trees blooming around every corner. Join DeSoto State Park staff and guest speakers for a wonderful weekend of learning about the many species of blooming plants found on Lookout Mountain. Wildflower Saturday is an annual free event hosted by DeSoto State Park that is traditionally held the first Saturday of May. The weekend will begin on Friday, May 5, with a welcome social and program on *Landscaping with Native Plants* presented by Park Naturalist Brittney Hughes from 6 until 7:15 p.m. On Saturday, May 6, you’ll have the opportunity to explore three different trails, with hikes leaving for each one at 9 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m. A presentation on *Wildflower Folklore* by speaker Ila Hatter will bring the weekend to a close on Saturday night at 7:15 p.m. All times are Central. Visit alapark.com/DSP-Wildflower-Saturday for details about the various hikes and the special talks.

Keeping Mentone Free of Litter

by Kelly Leavitt

The Mentone Clean-up has been held annually on an early spring Saturday morning for over two decades. Organized by Mentone resident Lyle Nicely and facilitated by many others, it has made a difference in the beauty of our landscape. It’s particularly important because much roadside litter could eventually find its way to Little River or one of its tributaries. Attendance was low at this year’s clean-up in April, prompting Lyle to rethink the future. The new plan is to encourage everyone to “adopt a mile” of the state highway or a county road, whether informally or more formally through the state’s Adopt-a-Mile program, and to personally tend to the road in front of their home. The Adopt-a-Mile program is a partnership between Alabama PALS (People Against a Littered State) and the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Information and an application can be found at alpal.org. Personalized Adopt-a-Mile signs will be provided for groups or individuals wanting to adopt a mile on all Alabama, U.S. and county highways. Upon completion of the application process, PALS prints the signs and sends them to the nearest ALDOT office for placement. Much of the stretch along AL Hwy. 117 from downtown Mentone to the Georgia state line has been adopted by the Rhododendron Garden Club, Camp Laney, and DeKalb County Democrats. Lyle encourages anyone interested to contact him at 256-996-0169 to learn how to complete this important stretch of road. Together, we can make a big difference.



The Groundhog

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by the Mentone Area
Preservation Association

MAPA was first conceived on Groundhog Day, 1982, and then organized on April 5, 1982. *The Groundhog* has been in publication for 40 years.

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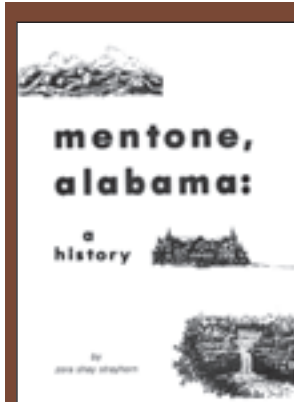
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the Mentone Area Preservation Association.*

*Groundhog woodcut courtesy of
Meg Justice/Bee Spring Studio*

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**Learn about
the History of
Mentone**
Zora Strayhorn's
book, *Mentone,
Alabama: A History*,
is for sale
in the MAPA office
for \$15.

Free Smoke Alarms

Did you know that home fires claim seven lives every day, but having working smoke alarms can cut the risk of death by half? The Mentone Area Preservation Association is partnering with the North Lookout Mountain Fire Protection District to provide free smoke alarms to local residents.

The alarms are provided by the American Red Cross as part of their “Sound the Alarm” program. We have a limited number available, so we must limit distribution to two per family, first-come, first-served.

Come to the MAPA/Groundhog office in the old schoolhouse building at Moon Lake Village on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday between 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., or call 256-289-2002 to make an appointment.

If you need help installing an alarm, let us know and we’ll see if one of the firemen can help.

Fire Safety Evaluation

The North Lookout Mountain Fire Protection District offers an important free service for any in need, especially seniors. If you would like them to come look at your yard or house for recommendations on how to prevent forest or house fires, call Chief Joseph Lee at 256-899-4027.



Mentone Matters

by Mayor Rob Hammond

Thanks to all who participated in our annual litter pick-up and cookout. Because of everyone’s busy schedules it is hard to find one day when all wishing to volunteer can attend. Lyle Nicely has come up with a good solution. He is seeking groups and individuals who would like to Adopt-a-Mile on AL 117 or on one of the county roads. By doing this, the litter pick-up will be ongoing all year long. Lyle proposes we would still have an annual community cookout for the volunteers. If you or your organization would like to Adopt-a-Mile, call Lyle at 256-996-0169.

District 1 Commissioner Shane Wooten, with help from Nathaniel Ledbetter, has secured funding to resurface DeKalb 89 from AL 117 to Tutwiler Gap. He is uncertain when work will begin as paving contractors have a backlog of work.

Hopefully the town will soon have two proposals



for electrical and structural work for Moon Lake School. Ladd Environmental should begin design work on phase two of the sidewalk project soon. The town has contracted with Ladd Environmental to do a feasibility study for sewer from the top of the mountain to the post office along AL 117. Farmers Telecommunications has begun work on installing fiber optic cable for high-speed internet in the Mentone area. Farmers is working on providing the town a map showing where service will be available under this grant.



From the Editor

by Kelly Leavitt

What an exciting month we have ahead of us! Many activities have been planned in Mentone and neighboring towns. You’ll find details throughout this issue about Wildflower Saturday at DeSoto State Park, the Big Art Pop-Up at the Mentone Inn Pavilion, the new Mentone Tour of Gardens, a free concert by Will Dooley & Co., and programs at Moon Lake Library and the Mentone Arts Center.

In the community calendar on page 13 are details about Memories of Mayberry Festival in Valley Head, Little River kayak trips, the May on the Mountain Bluegrass Festival in Henagar, and a new event at Fort Payne’s Opera House—the Boom Town Opry. (This unique event looks particularly fun to me!)

MAPA is resuming hosting Sunset Socials on June 1, so be sure to mark your calendar and join us at Brow Park for camaraderie and (with hope) a beautiful sunset.

All these events are great ways to have some fun, support our local organizations, and make some new friends.

I’ll write more next month about the future of the Mentone Area Clean-up, but for now I want to give a shout out to all the good folks who I see from time to time out on the roads, picking up litter in front of their homes or even further down the road. There are more people doing this small but important act of service than we might realize. When you see these helpful neighbors, give them a wave and allow plenty of space as you pass.

The photo above is of a native azalea on our land. She’s really showing off this year. I’d say it’s about 10 feet tall, and I love being greeted by the burst of pink from way down the road on my drive home.

Color is everywhere during the month of May—one of my favorite months on the mountain.

Have a lovely month, everyone. —Kelly



Laura Pullen O’Tinger interviewed her aunt, Linda Pullen Burns, and father, Walt Pullen, on April 20 for MAPA’s Oral History series. A video of the evening is on MAPA’s YouTube channel at youtube.com/@mapamentone. Linda and Walt told some great, very entertaining stories about growing up in Mentone and we appreciate their participation very much.



The Mentone Area Preservation Association (MAPA) regrets to announce a hiatus for Colorfest this fall. This year’s cancellation is a temporary pause for the festival. MAPA’s leadership board and others have spent many hours in discussion evaluating certain issues and conditions which affect our ability to plan for this year’s festival. We share the community’s disappointment.

As Mentone grows and evolves, so must our response. Some background: The festival’s earliest days were at the town square, with a parade along AL Hwy. 117. For many years, it was held on the brow, along North Cool Street. Last year, it moved to Moon Lake Village. The reason for this move was, first and foremost, safety. Traffic in town and along AL Hwy. 117 sometimes came to a standstill, possibly delaying first responder vehicles. New development along the brow and reduced open land for parking also created a challenge. Moon Lake Village is a wonderful venue and last year’s festival was fabulous.

On March 14, 2023, Mentone’s Town Council

Colorfest Update

learned that significant repairs are necessary to the original Moon Lake School structure in order to safely and responsibly utilize the building. MAPA is grateful for and fully supports our Council’s commitment to preserve one of Mentone’s last remaining historic landmarks. The situation impacts our ability to clearly plan a major festival with thousands in attendance. The project will likely take several months, and we are uncertain as to what state of repair the building will be in mid-October. It could be a construction zone and we feel an abundance of caution is most appropriate. For safety reasons, we decided to cancel this year’s festival. This is a necessary part of the evolution.

Beyond this primary issue, the parking and traffic generated by the event remain an ongoing safety and logistical challenge. We are in discussion with adjacent landowners, exploring ways to keep pedestrians off East River Road and be able to provide sufficient parking.

MAPA will be spending the next several months continuing our pursuit of solutions for the future. We’re in the midst of an effort to help make everything better in the future, from the schoolhouse to the traffic, with safety always being at the forefront. We appreciate our community’s ongoing support and we do hope you understand this difficult decision.

We are busily developing events and programs for the remainder of this year that celebrate Mentone’s spirit and rich history. If you are interested in helping with any future events, please join our email list at mapamentone.com/email and/or join our Facebook volunteer group at facebook.com/groups/mapavolunteers.

Message from MAPA’s President

by Beverly Haynes

It seems that we finally have some consistent spring weather, with a little winter thrown to keep us wondering whether to store our winter clothes or not. I personally love the crisp mornings and the afternoons that move from comfortable to hot with little warning.

This means it’s time for Sunset Socials on the Brow to start again! They were so much fun last year. I met so many wonderful people! My hope is to meet that many more this time. The first Sunset Social will be on Thursday, June 1, beginning at 7:15 p.m. at the Brow Park pavilion. Bring a snack to share, dress comfortably, and just enjoy yourself.

Now, to bring up a less happy subject—Colorfest. After hours and hours of discussion and tossing around, MAPA’s board of directors came to the conclusion that Colorfest must be put on hiatus this year. The preservation and repair efforts at Moon Lake School are an unknown right now. The area around the school could be a total construction zone, with all the inherent safety concerns that go with the project. We would never want to put anyone in a situation that could cause injury, no matter how unintentionally.

Parking was still a HUGE problem last year and we have not been able to come up with a good solution that would allow traffic to move freely on Highway 117 and East River Road. Even though we had great volunteers parking the cars, there were still just too many. And, too, the van that was donated to move people from the parking lot to the school campus wasn’t large enough and there were so many folks who had to walk. Although Michele Kincer and I had a GREAT TIME taking folks back and forth! We want to give a shout out to anyone who was brave enough and had enough sense of fun to ride with us! You rock!

MAPA, in the meantime, is pursuing new programs and creating new events that will focus on Mentone itself. The history, the untold stories, hidden or forgotten things that have made Mentone what it is...a place we love, whether we are natives

or transplants here. Stay focused as we archive Mentone memories for all to read and see, for future generations to understand their past.

The Mentone Area Heritage Scholarship was created this year to take the place of the Miss Rhododendron Pageant. This will allow both males and females an opportunity to win a year’s scholarship to Northeast Alabama Community College. Applicants had to write an essay about historical Mentone, Valley Head or Hammondville. Alternately, if the family of the applicant has lived in these areas for at least 100 years they could submit an essay pertaining to that. We proudly announce that Emily Hulgán won the scholarship based on her essay! We will present her the scholarship at her awards ceremony in May.

We are deeply grateful to the Little River Arts Council for providing the Friday night music that has traditionally been a part of the Rhododendron Festival and for the Pop-Up art show on Saturday. This is what makes Mentone beautiful—people working together to fill in any gap with fun and beauty.

And speaking of beauty, DeSoto State Park is really beginning to bloom. The newness of spring has completely taken over the woods. My husband and I walk the trails several times a week. He is encouraging me to advance from the easiest of the trials to harder and harder ones. I am finding that I can walk a lot further there than I ever have on a track. That being said, you might think about joining one of the Wildflower Saturday walkabouts on May 6.

Finally, I would like to thank all the businesses that advertise in *The Groundhog*. We are so appreciative of them. *The Groundhog* would not be possible without the advertisers. Show your support by buying from or using them when you need something.

As usual, you may contact me with questions or concerns at mapamentone@gmail.com. Stay well and God bless.



Mentone Area Preservation Association

Mentone Area Heritage Scholarship Awarded to Emily Hulgán

The Mentone Area Preservation Association is pleased to announce the winner of our first Mentone Area Heritage Scholarship. Emily Hulgán of Valley Head will receive a full year’s tuition to Northeast Alabama Community College for the 2023–2024 school year.

Emily is a senior at Ider School, where her father, Matthew, teaches 6th grade math. Her mother is Amy Burrows. Emily has attended Ider since 7th grade.

In preparing to research and write the essay for her scholarship application, Emily received help from her paternal grandmother, Norma Hulgán, who explained how to find census records and grave markers at findagrave.com and explained some of the history of the family land.

“Writing this essay made me more aware of not just my family but the history of the area and the history of Fort Payne,” Emily said. “My grandmother drove me around to visit the Trails of Tears locations in Fort Payne. It is really interesting knowing the history of where you live, because you don’t ever think about that. It’s changed the way I see the area and how the community and area have grown and changed.”

We hope you will enjoy Emily’s essay below, which was accompanied by copies of historic family records. Congratulations, Emily!

“When the roots are deep, there is no reason to fear the wind.” —African Proverb

In today’s transient society, how many small communities have residents whose families have settled there for one hundred years or more? You could say that the loss of a multi-generational family place is harmful to modern generations. Thankfully some are still benefiting from the knowledge and the history shared by families who continue to thrive in the same communities where their ancestors lived and by preservation organizations such as MAPA and Landmarks of Dekalb County. My siblings and I are fortunate that seven generations of the Hulgán family have lived in Valley Head for 180 years.

After the Trail of Tears forced the Cherokee Nation out of Dekalb County, the government opened the

land to white settlers (Landmarks). Robert Miller Hulgán (b. 1811), my fourth-great-grand father relocated to Valley Head in or about 1843 (Hulgán). He appears here in the 1850 census records (US Census 1850). One of his sons, Alfred Green Hulgán, who was born in North Carolina in 1833, is the father of Phillip Hulgán (b. 1863), my great-great-grandfather the first of my Hulgán family born in Valley Head, Alabama (US Census 1870). Phillip filed and received a homestead Patent in 1898, where he lived and raised fourteen children on the farm where I now live (Patent). His house was wood framed and lasted until destroyed by fire in 1958.

My great-grandfather, Clyde Hulgán (b. 1913), worked the farm at that time. After the fire, he hired his brother to build a new house using wood cut from our land. He moved his mother, Mattie Hulgán, his wife, and two sons into the new house. He continued to live there until he moved in with my grandfather, Danny Hulgán (b. 1955) in 2000. My dad, Matthew Joseph Hulgán, purchased the home, and our family continues to live there today.

Learning about this part of my history has made an impact on my life by influencing it as well as my understanding of the past. Hearing the family stories such as, my great-great-grandmother Hulgán telling my grandfather about watching the Union troops march along the road, on their way to the Battle of Chickamauga during the American Civil War. She watched as the troops stopped at a spring near their house to set up camp. These moments are told from generation to generation bringing history to life and even preserving it through time.

Preserving history is important to everyone because it gives us a sense of identity and a connection to our past. Communicating what I have come to understand about my past to my children and grandchildren will be much richer because of the time I have spent in Mentone, Valley Head, and on our farm with my grandparents. Understanding my family history gives me hope for the future when I see what they have accomplished after moving here with nothing but what they could carry in a horse-drawn wagon. Their hard work and determination are an inspiration to all who follow.



My ancestor’s accomplishments benefit my family because we live on the land homesteaded by my great-great-grandfather, Phillip. On this land, we have a farm on which we work just like they did. Growing beef cattle and hay connects my past, present, and hopefully my future to my ancestors who also grew crops and cattle. My family enjoys many activities that my ancestors may have enjoyed on this farm. We like riding horses all day on Saturdays, packing a lunch and some snacks as they may have when traveling from place to place. We also work with cattle during the spring; we round them up, give them medicines, and brand them, similar to how farmers have done for generations. I have spent many days running, playing, and living on this land. I have often walked by the tumble of rocks that remain from the original homestead’s chimney and foundation, waded in the spring where they carried their drinking water, and skipped down the obsolete road where the soldiers marched and neighbors stopped at the spring to water their horses.

Preserving the history and natural beauty of the Mentone, Valley Head, and Hammondville communities is important for us now and future generations. Not only has this land soaked up the blood, sweat, and tears of my ancestors, it has witnessed their love, joy, and laughter too. How many more generations will live, play and work on this farm?



Gratitude for a Great Event

by Anna Mae Horn

After 30 years of serving the community, MERF (Mentone Educational Resources Foundation) is still going strong! The annual Taste of the Mountain Art Auction was once again a sell-out event. Many thanks to all of our donors, sponsors, and volunteers who gave, served, and supported.

The setting at Camp Skyline paired well with this event and plates piled high as local chefs spoiled guests with a taste of their popular dishes. Artwork generously donated by local artists and Ms. Paula's Valley Head students found new homes after a competitive silent auction and an exciting live auction.

The proceeds of this popular MERF event provide for the arts program at Valley Head School to include field trips for Valley Head School students. Ms. Paula Easter is the backbone of this program and continues to be a beloved figure at the school as she spreads joy, builds confidence, and encourages wonder in her eager students. As a small, rural community, we rely on one another for support. Many thanks to all who support MERF and all who strive to strengthen our community.

The Carter Holland Memorial Scholarship is now open for graduating seniors living in the Valley Head and Mentone area. Applicants will submit an essay on how they plan to give back to the local community and demonstrate leadership, kindness, and good character in honor of the young Southern gentleman that Carter Holland was. See your school counselor for details or email MERF.mentone@gmail.com for a digital copy of the application. The deadline is May 10. Visit our website, MERFhouse.org, for more information.

Anna Mae Horn is the executive director of the Mentone Educational Resources Foundation. She can be reached at 256-635-8775 or merf.mentone@gmail.com.



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kindness, and good character
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**Mentone Arts Center is hosting
a Summer Luncheon for Seniors
on May 31 at 11:30 a.m.
at the sculpture garden
in downtown Mentone.**

In case of inclement weather, it will be held inside the gallery.



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Rhododendron Garden Club News

by Alyce Kenney



“A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all, it teaches trust.” —Gertrude Jekyll

Spring is here. The forsythia, redbud, dogwoods, and even the Bradford pears have had their fashion show, and now it is time for the less grand beauties of our area to strut their stuff. As it is said, “April showers bring May flowers,” and so the flowers and other luscious green plants in our own and our neighbors’ gardens are beginning their latest endeavors. The fear of frost has passed (we hope, we think) and the most intrepid of us are already getting our hands dirty. Members of the Rhododendron Garden Club have been out and about “cleaning up” some of the neglected spaces in Mentone recently, and discovering a lot of interesting plants (and other items) living alongside us. Some are invasive, and that can mean trouble. As you create your garden spaces, be aware of this. It will save you a lot of frustration later on. For more information on invasive species in Alabama, go to gardenia.net.

Our fascination with plants began back in the history of settlers coming to America with seeds and plants from their home land. Food for sustenance and trade was supplied by planting various crops. The soil and seasons of the year were our first true companions. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 doubled the land area of the United States and opened up a whole new “world” to be settled, and that included setting up gardens of all kinds, depending on the interests and backgrounds of those settling



Members of the Rhododendron Garden enjoyed a trip to the Shirley Miller Wildflower Trail at the Pocket on Pigeon Mountain in early April.

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the land. Fast forward to 1878, when the W. Atlee Burpee & Co. of Philadelphia was founded and later became the largest mail-order seed company in the world. The first garden club was formed in 1891 in neighboring Athens, GA. Folks then understood the importance of the relationships between plants and people for survival, enjoyment, and education. The story continues with many more interesting facts and a fascinating history of our love and need of horticulture, gardens, orchards, arboretums, and more on the Smithsonian Gardens’ interactive website at gardens.si.edu.

For the first time ever, the Rhododendron Garden Club is holding a garden tour in and around Mentone! Several of our members are busy putting the final touches on their own unique properties and the excitement is building. Come and be enchanted by both sacred and sculpture gardens where art and nature live in harmony with one another. There are rainbow-petaled gardens dedicated to pollinators, perennials, and peonies too. Looking for a pleasant and unexpected surprise? You’ll need look no farther than the garden aptly named Serendipity. Wondering what is growing in Mary’s Garden? Come join the fun to find out! Enjoy a spring afternoon outdoors, viewing a diverse selection of garden types while you get to know the gardeners and gather ideas for your own green spaces. All are welcome, especially birds, bees, and butterflies! The tour will take place Saturday, May 13, 1–4 p.m. CDT. Tour maps can be found at the Mentone Market, Sennett Art Gallery, Little River Hardware, and Moon Lake Trading Company. The tour is free, but donations will be welcomed. All donations will go towards Mentone beautification projects. The rain date is May 20. Please come out to enjoy the natural beauty and lovely people of our community! We thank you for your support.

A garden is a microcosm of the outside world. Gardeners are acutely aware of the rhythms and cycles of nature: which flowers are in their prime, when to plant out the seedlings, when and how much it last



White trillium and foam flower

rained. Just as music is time made audible, so the garden in “time made visible” (Clive James). Stay tuned to our Facebook page and the monthly Groundhog to learn more. Want to get involved? Join us! Have plants you want to donate? We’ll come get them. Don’t know what’s growing in your garden? Need some answers? Drop us a note at rhododendrongardenclub@gmail.com. Our next meeting is at 10 a.m. CDT on Tuesday, May 9, at the MERF House in Mentone. The program for the meeting is to spruce up the MERF House property. They say, “Many hands make light work,” so bring your favorite gardening tools and be prepared to have some fun. The Rhododendron Garden Club is a member of National Garden Clubs, Inc., Deep South Garden Club, Inc., the Garden Club of Alabama, Inc.—District II, and the Northeast Alabama Federation of Garden Clubs. Alyce Kenney serves as secretary for the Rhododendron Garden Club.

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A Bit of Military History

by Barry Morton

Memorial Day (originally known as Decoration Day) is a federal holiday in the United States for mourning the U.S. military personnel who have died while serving in the United States armed forces. From 1868 to 1970, it was observed on May 30. It is now observed on the last Monday of May. This year, 2023, Memorial Day is May 29.

Memorial Day began as “Decoration Day,” a designated time to decorate the gravestones of many of the roughly 620,000 people killed in the Civil War.

It is unclear when and where this act of commemoration first took place: around 25 communities have been tied to the origin of Memorial Day, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, with one such event reportedly held as far back as October, 1864 in Pennsylvania.

New York became the first state to designate Decoration Day a legal holiday in 1873, and by 1890, every other former Union state had followed suit. By the conclusion of World War I, the focus shifted from honoring those killed on Civil War battlefields to all men and women who had died while fighting for the United States. In the years that followed, the holiday became more widely known as Memorial Day.

In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Uniform Holiday Bill, which packaged several federal holidays into the tail end of three-day weekends with the hope of stimulating travel and commerce. As a result, Memorial Day has been celebrated on the fourth Monday of May since 1971.

Confederate Memorial Day is a statutory holiday in Alabama on the fourth Monday in April. Recognized in 1901, the holiday was originally publicly presented as a day to remember the estimated 258,000 Confederate soldiers who died during the American Civil War.

Many people visit cemeteries and memorials on Memorial Day to honor and mourn those who died while serving in the U.S. military. Many volunteers place American flags on the graves of military personnel in national cemeteries. Memorial Day is also considered the unofficial beginning of summer in the United States.

The federal holidays of Veterans Day and Memorial Day are both designed to celebrate members of the

U.S. military, but there are a few key differences.

Memorial Day, which took shape after the Civil War, is considered a day to honor those who were killed in or as a result of participating in battle. Veterans Day, which materialized at the end of World War I, is a day to honor all service men and women, but especially those who remain



Don Wood has many uniforms of real heroes.

with us to share their experiences.

Legionnaire Don Wood will be presenting the “World War II Speaker Series,” covering key aspects of the war every third Tuesday at 1800 (6 p.m. for civilians) through September at the Mentone American Legion post at 195 Cove Road in Mentone. If you’ve never heard Don, he’s an expert historian. The whole second floor of his home is a museum. He’s got over 100 badges, pins, uniforms and photos.

This Memorial Day, a lot is going to happen at the Mentone American Legion. We will place flags at all the military men and women’s gravestones in our local cemeteries. At the Post, we are hosting a luncheon of grilled hamburgers (\$10 donation) and hot dogs (\$5 donation) from 11 a.m.–2 p.m., with food donated by the



One of Don's display cases with WWII artifacts



Don exhibiting a Nazi flag

Mentone Market. At noon, we are pulling the 50/50 winner who will win \$1,000! The public is welcome to attend both.

To learn more, text me at 334-202-8936 or the Vice Commander Bruce Van Apeldoorn at 252-675-0579. Check out our Mentone American Legion FB Group.

Barry Morton is the Commander of the Mentone American Legion Post 215.

Mentone Tour of Gardens

Saturday, May 13
1–4 p.m.
*Rain date May 20
See page 6 for details.*

Senior Health: Speaking to Your Doctor

by Lynn Hixon

It is important to build an effective relationship with your doctor so that you can ensure that you get the best health care possible and make the most of your visits. Here is a list of things to consider:

Communication

Communication is very important when building relationships with your health care providers and getting the best possible care. To help you communicate with your providers, take the following steps.

Be Prepared

Arrive at your doctor’s office prepared with your health insurance cards, a copy of your health history if you are a new patient, and a list of questions you want to ask your doctor. Bring something to take notes on what your doctor tells you. Consider bringing another person, like a family member, friend, or caregiver, if you think they can help. Don’t forget your list of current medications.

Share Information

Tell your doctor about symptoms you’re

having and any trouble you’re having with activities of daily living. Share about other providers you’ve seen and any treatments they recommend.

Ask Questions

If you don’t understand something your doctor says, ask them to explain it.

Get It in Writing

Ask your doctor to write down what you should do between now and your next visit, including instructions for how to take medicines, specialists you should see, or lifestyle modifications.

Follow Up

If you experience any issues after your appointment, call your doctor’s office to schedule a follow-up. Ask your doctor’s office if they use email or an online portal to communicate with patients.

Please call the DeKalb County Council on Aging at 256-845-8590 and ask for Lynn Hixon with the State Health Insurance Assistance Program if you need help understanding Medicare’s coverage rules or if you have experienced potential fraud, errors, or abuse.

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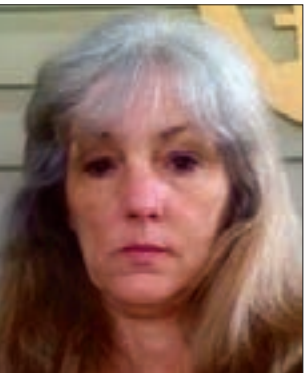


In Memoriam



MAKENNA JOY PURVIS
September 9, 2003 – September 26, 2022

Makenna is survived by many family members and friends who loved her very much. In lieu of flowers the family requests donations to the Summit of Fort Payne (P. O. Box 215, Rainsville, AL 35986 or summitoffortpayne.com).



EVELYN ANNETTE HAWKINS
March 30, 1963 – April 16, 2023

Evelyn Annette Hawkins, age 60, of Mentone, passed away on Sunday, April 16, 2023 at DeKalb Regional Medical Center. She is survived by her husband, Jon Hawkins; sons, Greg, Alan, Matt, and Michael; siblings, DeeAnn, Terri, and Wesley; 10 grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, John Wells and Norma Gregory Wells.

She was laid to rest at Little River Cemetery.



PAMELIA LANIER DEAN
July 26, 1961 – April 18, 2023

Pamela Lanier Dean, age 61, of Valley Head, passed away on Tuesday, April 18, 2023. She is survived by her son, Zack Dean; daughter, Kaitlyn (Cody) Tedder; stepson, Jason (Hollie) Dean; grandchildren, Tyler, Rhett, and Erin Dean, Kopelyn and John David Tedder; father, Calvin Lanier; brother, Steve (Tammy) Lanier; aunts, Carol Monroe & Barbara Lyles; sisters-in-law, Doris (Kenny) Chamlee and Debra (Steve) Rhodes; mother-in-law, Edith Dean; daughter-in-law, Anne Dean; nieces and nephews, Taylor (Preston) Holcomb, Tatum Lanier, Allie and Wesley Rhodes; chosen children, Tiffany (Steven) Carroll and family, Charity Crowe and kids; and special friend, Cindy Everett.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 32 and a half years, David Dean; son, SSG Jonathan Dean; mother, Myra Lanier; father-in-law: John Dean; and grandparents, Clarence and Willene Newman, and Reeves and Sallie Lanier.

She was laid to rest at Valley Head Cemetery.

MIKE HUTCHINS
January 14, 1950 – April 12, 2023

Mike Hutchins, age 73, of Summerville, GA, died Wednesday, April 12, 2023, at Advent Health Redmond. Mr. Hutchins was born January 14, 1950, in LaFayette, GA, son of the late W.A. and Sarah Harper Hutchins. He was a 1968 graduate of Chattooga High School and a graduate of the University of Georgia. Mr. Hutchins was a retired farmer. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a niece, Sara Jane Hunter. Survivors include his wife of 30 years, Genela Garmon Hutchins; children, Amy (Jeromie) Hartline, Krista (Josh) Flanigan, and Connie (Claye) Barwick; sisters, Ann Hutchins, Mary (Kevin) Firsdon; 4 grandchildren; and several nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews.



Carl McCleskey & Betsy Scott

by Kelly Leavitt

Renowned wildlife sculptor Carl McCleskey of Cloudland, GA, will be celebrated at a memorial service at the Mentone Arts Center on Sunday, May 7, from 12 to 3 p.m. CDT. Carl passed away on November 15, 2022 at age 86. Carl began drawing at a young age, learning by watching and then helping his father, who drew sketches of farm implements which he submitted for patents. Carl’s early penchant for painting and drawing cartoons evolved into becoming a well-known sculptor whose work is enjoyed in private and public collections worldwide. “Anything he wanted to do, he was able to do,” said his wife, Betsy Scott. Carl and Betsy worked side-by-side for almost five decades. They met in 1976, when Betsy learned the craft of blacksmithing at Carl’s shop in Marietta, GA. Her intention was to then study horticulture at graduate school, but instead she decided to commit herself to blacksmithing. The two collaborated on “fire tools, a spiral staircase, railings for Lennox Square, whatever people wanted,” she said. “For years, Carl made special horseshoes for farriers and then began welding the steel trimmings together to make sculptures,” said Betsy. “He eventually started

(continued on page 9)



Carl and Betsy with the one-ton, 12' tall "Great Blue Herons" sculpture that was commissioned for the Greg Norman Golf Course in Florida



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These larger-than-life-size gorillas reside at the Audobon Zoo in New Orleans.

Carl McCleskey & Betsy Scott (continued from page 8)

working in clay and having things cast. After something is cast, the various pieces are welded together. There’s a lot of work after that to grind out the weld seams and make everything blend. Then it’s sandblasted and heat and chemicals are used to apply the patina for the color.”

Once Carl had the experience of doing some smaller pieces, Betsy sent photographs of his work to the Audubon Institute in New Orleans, LA, who had put out a call for lion sculptures for its zoo. “They wanted a larger-than-life pride of lions,” Betsy said. “We drove down to meet with the CEO. We drove home with an order for two Gate Lions at the entrance to the zoo and a pride of lions that would reside atop Monkey Hill, the highest point in New Orleans. With about a ton of clay at hand, Carl started at the nose of the first Gate Lion, I took the tail, and we met in the middle. Our teamwork in sculpture was truly born. We ended up doing about 20 life-size and monumental pieces for the Institute, including gorillas, baboons, a cheetah, a gazelle, and an assortment of other animals and reptiles.” Their work can be seen at zoos across the country.

The couple bought property in Cloudland in 1981 and relocated from Marietta in 1984. “We lived so far off the road that we didn’t have phone or power for years,” said Betsy. “We ran off batteries. We cut trees on the land and took them to Baty’s sawmill in Mentone to make the 2x4s we used to build the house. We finally built a ‘real’ house, but at that point I realized other people had much better plumbing and wiring skills than I, so they did most of the work. Carl proudly said it was

the house that lions built.”

A portion of their property had been strip mined and was in need of reclamation, so the pair worked to restore the land, minding the needs of wildlife by building ponds and planting thousands of trees. Teeming with wildlife, the land inspired their creativity.

Carl and Betsy lived an adventurous life while following their passions. Watching Carl draw, Betsy began making her own botanical drawings. “I started taking pictures of Carl’s sculptures and discovered the allure of photography. Flowers became irresistible subjects once I plunged into ‘chasing the light fantastic.’ I was hooked,” she said. “Carl’s immersion in and fulfillment through sculpting was contagious. I had to give it a whirl. Then I understood its irresistible pull.”

Carl tended to create the smaller pieces by himself, with Betsy helping with the monumental pieces. “Mentone artist Sandra Comley helped us make molds. She was a tremendous help in everything we did,” said Betsy. “Once we found Sandra, she was indispensable.”

A selection of Carl’s smaller sculptures are available at the Mentone Arts Center, as are Betsy’s photographs. “The sculpture of Sequoyah in our garden is a wonderful piece of art that Carl and Betsy created and donated to our area,” said Randy Grider, director of the Arts Center. The expense of materials was funded by a grant. Located at the Stephen Brewer Sculpture Garden next to the Mentone Arts Center on AL Hwy. 117, the sculpture is available for people to enjoy at any time of day or night.



Sequaoyah developed the Cherokee syllabary when he lived in the area of Valley Head and Fort Payne.



Carl working on a clay lion in his studio



Carl and Betsy with one of their many life-size lions

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With a successful year, Little River Escape has decided to embark on a new journey by creating River Ridge Escape Tiny Home Dealership. At the dealership, tiny homes are available to tour and purchase. RRE is now delivering across the nation and also developing other communities to bring more folks to Lookout Mountain.

River Ridge Escapes now has five tiny home communities and one down County Road 641 in Mentone, AL. There are several Airbnb Tiny Homes in our various locations to come experience a tiny home, downsizing, the community, and explore the surrounding areas.

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Getting the Most From Your Medicare Benefits

Lynn Hixon to Speak at Moon Lake Library Tuesday, May 16
by Anne McLeod

Adulting, as the kids call it, can be hard. Taxes, insurance, bills —none of us is born knowing how to navigate the tangle of bureaucracies. Turning 65 means signing up for Medicare, and that can be intimidating, with the program’s various parts and benefits. Fortunately, there’s help available to assist you through the Medicare maze. Lynn Hixon from the DeKalb County Council on Aging will speak at Moon Lake Library on Tuesday, May 16, at 1 p.m. to explain how to get the most from your Medicare benefits. If you are approaching age 65 or are already on Medicare but still have questions about the program, this is an opportunity to get those questions answered. Come to the library on May 16 for this free, informal session aimed at saving you time and money.

Little Library Learners

Get Geared Up for Summer Reading!

by Lynn Vanderhoff

It has been a school year of fun programs for Little Library Learners. We read books, played games, sang songs, created frog houses, and celebrated Halloween, April Fool’s Day and World Book Day. The program for children ages 3–7 on Saturday, May 6, at 10:30 a.m. will be a fantastic finale to the school year with stories and activities on our

flying friends as we learn about bird migration. Come check it out, and get a jump on the tons of fun coming up in our Summer Reading Program! The theme for our 2023 Summer Reading Program is “All Together Now!” We’ll celebrate friendship, community, and kindness all summer long with stories, crafts, and games. Little Library Learners will meet each

Saturday in June and July, with the exception of July 1. The first program will be held on June 3. Older kids and teens can stop by the library any time we’re open to pick up grab-and-go bags of activities. Watch for more information next month about “All Together Now.”



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Lynn Hixon, Council on Aging
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Will Dooley & Co. to Usher in “Music for the People”

by Rhea Pirch



“Music for the People” Series

May 19
Will Dooley & Co.
“American Folk Grass”

June 10
Black Sedan Band
70s – 90s Cover Band
blacksedanband.com

July 8
Natti Love Joys
Reggae
nattilovejoys.com

August 12
The Lazybirds
Blues, Jazz, Country, Ragtime
lazybirds.com

Summer is on its way, along with the music! Our 8th annual season of “Music For the People” starts on May 19 from 7–10 p.m. with a concert featuring an all-time Mentone favorite, Will Dooley and Co. Will and his friends have been entertaining Mentone audiences each May and October since 2010 with their blend of Folk, Americana and Blue Grass, a combination Will refers to as “American Folk Grass.”

Will (or “Dooley” as his friends know him best), a Fort Payne native, got his start in music when he was 12 years old and learned to play the fiddle under the tutelage of Mentone native and renowned fiddle player James Bryan. He moved on to playing the guitar and banjo, and still plays all three to varying degrees, although the guitar is his favorite. He wrote his first song, “Crossroads of Life,” when he was 17 and started performing for the public shortly after. He has since played at venues and festivals all over the southeast. His “Co.” varies from concert to concert and can include Elisha (“Jolly”) Tatum, Evan Maddox, Mark McKenzie, Will “House of Mud” Hadaway, Derek Wisenhat, Tony Brook, and James T. Brown (from the Lazybirds, a band from North Carolina who will be performing in Mentone on August 10.)

Will’s reputation as a talented musician has grown in the years since he picked up his first instrument. He’s been recognized by the Alabama Folklife Association and has released three CDs to date. The songs from his CD, “Play,” can be heard on Spotify, Pandora, and Amazon Music and includes his popular “Ole Freight Train” and “Leaky Faucet,” among others.

Will can also be heard on our own website, littleriverartscouncil.org. Click on the “Artist Showcase” link to hear him and world acclaimed singer/songwriter Tony Brook perform at the Fort Payne Opera House in a virtual concert in November 2020, one of our efforts to bring art and music to the public during the pandemic.

Will and his wife Jenny (also a talented singer) live in Sand Rock with their two children, Liam and Maggie Jean, who also, according to Will, can be heard singing in harmony around the house.

One of Will’s ambitions is to provide musicians with a venue to perform. To make this a reality, he has recently partnered with



Landmarks of DeKalb County to create “Boom Town Opry,” Fort Payne’s version of Hee Haw, a monthly show filled with skits and musical guests, held at the Fort Payne Opera House on the third Saturday of each month, to coincide with Fort Payne’s Third Saturday Cruise In. Will and his company of friends will kick off this summer event with a concert on May 20 at 6 p.m.

This year the start of Music for the People will also launch the Big Art Pop-Up, a one-day showcase of local artists and makers to be held on the grounds of the Mentone Inn on Saturday, May 20, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

LRAC believes that art is for everyone. Our mission is to enrich the quality of life for people in Mentone and neighboring communities by raising funds for the arts, sponsoring events, providing educational opportunities and strengthening cultural resources for the benefit of all businesses and citizens in the Mentone area. If you would like to support our mission, consider becoming a member and/or volunteering at one of our events. Becoming a member is easy! Visit littleriverartscouncil.org and click on the Membership tab.

Rhea Pirch serves as the board secretary of Little River Arts Council.

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Learning a New Chord Can Be More Than Just Learning a New Song

How Learning the “Dreaded” Bb Chord Led Us on a Day Trip to Aragon, Georgia

by Debra Fey and Jerry Megli

We tell folks the ukulele is an easy instrument to learn, and it is. But there are chords that are more challenging. Like the Bb chord. It is a partial barred chord and you can literally hear folks groan when we introduce a new song at a session and say this song contains the Bb chord. But learning a new chord within a new song is the best way to approach these chords, and Mickey Luck hit it out of the park (with us, at least) one day when he introduced “Aragon Mill” as a way to introduce the Bb chord.

Many songs, most songs, contain truths. Aragon Mill contains historical truths about a small mill town in northwest Georgia near the Alabama border called Aragon. Like many mill towns, the town itself grew up around the mill. Nearby Euharlee Creek provided necessary water for the mill. The Company provided a general store, a community pool, a barber shop/beauty salon, and a shoe store. A post office soon appeared, and “shot-gun” homes were constructed around the mill for the mill workers and their families. The mill operated from 1898 until it shut down in 1972. The property was in use off and on until a fire destroyed the complex in 2002. The original brick structure and tall chimney remain.

The song is a lament. When the mill closed in 1972 it devastated the town and its people. As the writer and composer, Si Kahn, states, a line in the song “it’s so quiet I can’t sleep” was spoken by a loom fixer whose front porch overlooked the now-silent weave room. Interestingly, the song was “adopted” by Ireland and renamed “Belfast Mills.” It is still a popular song there, considered an anthem to the country. When the mill closed down in Aragon, it shut down the town; when the linen mills closed in Ireland, it shut down the national economy.

When we realized the town of Aragon is only 60 miles from Mentone—ROAD TRIP! One warm, sunny day in March we drove to Aragon and were greeted by three city employees. They escorted us from City Hall a short distance to the mill property. A city



park with a pavilion and small lake adjoins the mill property. A float that used to support a water pump to the mill still remains. The city workers were more than happy to answer our questions as we walked around the perimeter fencing and peered through a broken window into the original building. They were so enthused by our interest they contacted the mayor who kindly drove over to meet with us. Her grandparents, parents, and some aunts and uncles worked at the mill and she spoke with considerable knowledge about the history of the mill, the early town, and even when her grandmother had to cross a picket line because she had “babies to feed.” Neither the mayor nor the city employees were aware of the song “Aragon Mill” but promised to look it up so they could see what it was that drew us to Aragon.

The historic and tragic event that inspired the song has a deeper meaning to us now. The lament more powerful. And we’re getting better at playing the “dreaded” Bb chord!



Connect with us on Facebook @MentoneUkes or at mentoneukes.com. Questions? Please contact Debra Fey (debrajfeey@gmail.com) or Jody Rhodes (jodyrhodesy@gmail.com).

Mentone Arts Center May Music & Art; Saluting Eugenia Johnston

by Randy Grider

May is shaping up to be an active month at the Center with music and art.

We kick off the month by hosting the monthly Music on the Mountain Songwriter Series on Tuesday, May 2 at 6:30 p.m. inside the Chuck Sennett Center for the Arts. The Nashville-style songwriters round kicks off with songwriters Stuart Douglas, James Durham, and a yet-to-be named songwriter as guests. The main feature changes a bit this month with a Q&A with Jon Kinsey and host Craig Hendricks, who recently won first place in the bi-monthly *American Songuriter Magazine*. The round is part educational and part entertainment. It is free to the public.

On Saturday, May 13, certified Bob Ross instructor Gary Grider returns to Mentone for a Paint Like Bob



Ross class featuring the Northern Nights. A few spots remain for this popular class. The tuition is \$100 and

includes all materials needed to create your own painting.

We have several other classes scheduled for the next few months, including a watercolors class June 3–4 by instructor Virginia Urani, acrylic workshops August 5–6 by instructor Lisa Opielinski, and glass beadmaking class by instructor Terry Hale on September 2–3. We also have a musical performance by Gwen (Hughes) and the Kats on July 14. More details on these classes and events will be provided in future issues.

May’s Artist of the Month is Eugenia Johnston, a multi-talented artist who works primarily in



Eugenia Johnston



Plein air painting by Eugenia Johnston of the A.A. Miller Dam at DeSoto Falls

watercolor, acrylic, and stained glass, both in her studio and plein air. “My current work explores transparency,” Johnston said. “The unique qualities of watercolor and stained glass allow me to interpret vision in a fresh way. I find that watercolor is a luminous, atmospheric medium for capturing landscapes en plein air.”

Johnston was born and raised in Birmingham before moving to Charlottesville, VA. She relocated to DeKalb County in 2007. Her art training includes the Birmingham Museum of Art, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and workshops and seminars throughout the Southeast over the past four decades. She has had solo shows in Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. Her work is in private, academic, and corporate collections in the southeast.

Johnston’s work displayed at the Arts Center includes paintings in watercolor, acrylic and oil. We also have gourd baskets she has created.

For more information or to register for any classes, email mentoneartscenter@gmail.com or call 245-674-3366.

Randy Grider is executive director of the Mentone Arts & Cultural Center.



May Community Events

May 4—National Day of Prayer. A service will be held at the Shigley Amphithater at Moon Lake Village in Mentone. 2 pm.

May 4—Canyon Kids. Join us for a hands-on adventure the 1st Thursday each month in 2023! Children (age 3 years–3rd graders) will want to attend ALL of these hands-on outdoor adventures! Bring your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and neighbors to creatively learn about animals, plants, bugs, and more with JSU Field Schools. In May we will be learning all about plants! Please wear footwear suitable for hiking, and bring water and sun protection. Free event. Registration strongly suggested. Limit 15 students. 10:30–11:30am. Little River Canyon Center, Fort Payne. For more details and for pre-registration, email rmtaylor@jsu.edu or call 256-845-3548.

May 4–7—Plein Air Painting. Come spend your weekend in Magical Mentone painting your way through nature and its surroundings with Plein Air Artist Extraordinaire, Durinda Cheek, at Andiamo Lodge in Mentone. Join us as we talk about light, color, and recreating nature with our brushes. Email info@andiamolodge.com for details.

May 5–6—31st Annual Wildflower Saturday. Wildflower Saturday is an annual event held in DeSoto State Park. Springtime at DeSoto State Park is truly beautiful, with wildflowers & trees blooming around every corner. Join DeSoto State Park staff & guest speakers for a wonderful weekend of learning about the many species of blooming plants found on Lookout Mountain. Choose to stay the whole weekend, or just come for the day to enjoy the hikes and programs. Weekend starts off with a welcome social and guest speaker program on Friday night, a day full of hikes to choose from and a guest speaker on Saturday night. More info at alapark.com/DSP-Wildflower-Saturday.

May 5—Family Game Night! Bring a snack to share and we'll enjoy board games at Moon Lake Library, Mentone. 6pm.

May 6—Little Library Learners. Stories and

crafts for children ages 3–7. This will be our only meeting in May, but get ready to sign up for the upcoming summer reading program! 10:30am. Moon Lake Library, Mentone.

May 6—Memories of Mayberry. A great day for the whole family! There will be a cruise-in, food, fun, entertainment, and more. Special guest will be Barney Fife. All proceeds go to the Fire Department. Located in the downtown square of Valley Head. 9am. 256-899-3776 or 256-635-6814.

May 6–7, 13–14, 20–21—Scenic Kayak Trips. Miller's Bend Paddle Shack in DeSoto Falls Picnic Area will help you begin your scenic kayak trip up the West Fork of Little River. Rent sit-on-top kayaks to enjoy a peaceful flatwater paddle on Little River overlooking beautiful DeSoto Falls. Your adventure can be up to 4 miles round trip, or as long as you want to make it! Paddle trips are perfect for individuals or groups. Life vests & paddles are provided. Call DeSoto State Park's Lodge for info: 256-845-5380 or alapark.com/kayak-little-river. Boat Shack hours: Saturday & Sunday 10am–6pm.

May 11 & 24—Courtyard Concerts. Featuring local and regional artists performing a variety of themes, styles, and genres. Admission is free. Gate opens at 5:30pm, music begins just after 6pm. A cash bar is available, as well as food, drink, and merchandise. Located at The Courtyard (beside DeKalb Theatre in Fort Payne).

May 13—Daybreak Flatwater Paddle Trip. DeSoto State Park staff offers this relaxing guided morning paddle trip on scenic Little River. Enjoy the peace and quiet of nature as we paddle upstream on the 'coke bottle clear' waters of the West Fork of Little River. Learn about this outstanding water source with its clear water, plant & animal life, and about the history of the area around DeSoto Falls. This trip is approximately 4 miles round

trip on flatwater, under your own power & spans a 3- to 3-1/2-hour period. Includes kayak, paddle, & personal flotation device. Bring appropriate clothing, bug spray, snacks, and drinking water. 7–10am. Meet at DeSoto Falls Picnic Area-Miller's Bend Paddle Shack. \$30 for single kayak rental (tandem kayaks are available on a limited basis for \$50) Pre-registration closes May 10, 2023 at 5pm. Pre-registration form: forms.office.com/g/a7YZCh60xv

May 13—May on the Mountain Bluegrass Festival. Get ready for a finger-lickin' and guitar-pickin' good time at the May on the Mountain Bluegrass Festival hosted by the Henagar Park Board! Come and hear local favorites as well as surprise guests. The performances will begin at 10am. Bring a lawn chair and a friend!

May 13—Moon Lake Library Book Club. Let's talk about books! Sometimes we read and discuss the same book. Other months, we share book recommendations. This is a great way to meet new friends and also get some good ideas about what to read next. 10:30am.

May 13 & 27—Mentone Ukles. Free ukulele lessons for all experience levels. 1pm. Moon Lake Library, Mentone.

May 14 Happy Mother's Day!

May 16—"Getting the Most from Your Medicare Benefits." Informative session presented by Lynn Hixon from the DeKalb County Council on Aging. 1pm. Moon Lake Library, Mentone.

May 17—Art Talk. When artists gather to talk about what moves them to create art, what is really created in that moment is community. A community of like-minded people who speak the same language. A community of people who are genuinely interested in learning and supporting each other. If this sounds like your kind of gathering, please join us. Bring your art and share your process. Moon Lake Library, Mentone. 6–8pm.

May 18–21—US 11 Antique Alley Yard Sale. Follow the scenic U.S. Highway 11 from Meridian, MS to Bristol, VA for more than 500 miles of yard sales! Explore charming historic communities and downtown districts like the 1889 boom town district of Fort Payne. 888-805-4740. visitlookoutmountain.com.

May 19—Will Dooley & Co. Free Concert. Come enjoy the great music of Will Dooley as the Little River Arts Council kicks off its Summer Music Series. Located on the lawn of the Mentone Inn's Linger Longer Pavilion. 7–10pm.

May 20—Big Art Pop Up. 10am–3pm. Mentone Inn.

May 20—Hammondville Fire BBQ Fundraiser. Plates include BBQ sandwich, chips, drinks & dessert. \$8/plate. Whole butts sold in advance \$40. 10am til ?

May 20—Third Saturday Cruise In. An afternoon of family fun activities in the Main Street District of Fort Payne. This public event includes food, live music, motorcycles, antique car show, and much more. 5–9pm.

May 20—Boom Town Opry. Landmarks of DeKalb County, Inc. is pleased to introduce the Boom Town Opry, its 2023 Summer Series. Think of it as Fort Payne's version of HeeHaw, with a featured cast of Players performing skits alongside musical guests & friends. It's sure to be a show that tickles your funnybone and leaves you with a tune in your ear. Each performance will take place during the Third Saturday Cruise-in, so come in and cool off after you check out the sights and sounds downtown. For a suggested donation of \$10, you can come and go throughout the performance. All proceeds benefit the restoration of the historic 1889 Opera House, so please give more if you can! 6–8pm. Located at the Fort Payne Opera House, 510 Gault Ave. N., Fort Payne.

May 20—Big Book Sale. Shop our complete collection of used books during extended hours. 10am–3pm. Moon Lake Library, Mentone.

May 22—Author Visit with Neal Wooten. Celebration of the paperback release of "With the Devil's Help: A True Story of Poverty, Mental Illness, and Murder." Neal will have books for sale and signing. 6:30pm. Moon Lake Library, Mentone.

May 29 Memorial Day

Weekly Meet-Ups at Moon Lake Library
CHESS on Tuesdays at 1
KNITTING and CROCHET Tuesdays at 2
SCRABBLE on Thursdays at noon

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PACHYDERM PACKRAT has a new booth at Dave's Antiques in Hammondville. Dave's, located at the intersection of Hwy. 117 and Hwy. 11, is open 7 days a week from 10 'til 4 and 12 'til 4 on Sunday. Come and see us during Antique Alley, May 18–21.

ESTATE AUCTION—Dave's Antiques is conducting an auction selling the estate of Maurice Magee. The Memorial Day Weekend sale, May 27th from 10 'til ? and the 28th from 12 'til ? will be held in the old Hwy. 159 Flea Market located at the exit for Hwy. 11 and 117.

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May Birthdays & Anniversaries

1 Junior Bell Riley Owen Kathleen Johnson Michael Stone Sue Anderson Beckie Crider Hughes Michelle Mancuso Jennifer Owen Nylah Bergeron Darlene Clifton Keith	7 John Johnson Tracy Coots Jessie Baggett Carl Griffith Kelly Blansit Tony Garner Maddie Gilbert	13 Christy Miller Lonny Pendergrass	19 Joe Elrod Amber Parker Adam Miller Sadie Durham Misty Wilson	25 Chris & LeAnn Underwood
2 Morgan McKenzie Ella Voils Cory Dobbins Isaac Vaughan Emerson Jean Bell LuLu Langston Carey Pike Destiny Hatfield	8 Connie Clark Ella Kate Wagner Sherry Durham Camdyn Goza Pippa Daspit	15 Shirley Zange Emma Kate McDonald	21 Tristan Smith Gracelia Dickson Faye Bone	27 Sawyer & Charlotte Vice
3 Abel James Baggett Paula Coots Steven Barkley Annabelle Gifford Henlee Langston Bret Hulgan	9 Shaunathan Bell Megan Miller Ryker Shankles	16 Amy Kirby Riley Mae Owen Kaylynn Hulgán Harli Burton	22 Paige Smith Rodney Mitchell Jackson Jones Jack Dutton	3 Thomas & Ginger Kearney
4 Mollie Sanderson Kathy Clure Cathy White Jody Nance Russell Bone	10 Gail Jones Angela Flanagan Jacob Hawkins Barry Morton Scott Gilbert	17 Jennifer Goggans Melinda Miller Owen Crouse Tommy Johnson Samuel Windom Loren Kean Lydia Hulgán	23 Keila Daniell Amanda Smith Christy VanPelt Hunter Villarreal Crystal Bettis Lebron Poe Matthew Wilson Cherylyn Rhodes	4 Donnie & Carlotta Sharpton
5 Alex Dupree Bobby Browder Emily Hilliard Jeffrey Bain Patrick Kyle Miller Charley Vest Karen Vest Dwight Powell	11 Jessie Coots Ricky Barkley Merle Stokes Gerald Biddle Tanner Meadows Sierra Crider Imogene Thomas	18 Chad Smith Nelson Kerby Traci Hulgán Mary Jo Yarbrough	24 James Cox Mikayla Owen Sophie Hulgán Nick Stout Hannah Highfield	5 Charlie & Pam Harwell John & Dowe Foreman
6 LA Smith Lee Worthey Phil Harris Carlie Heard Cody Hodge Taylor Williams Dewayne Grisham Avaleigh Hawkins Ray Zakary	12 Hubert Blalock Allison Kirby Chris Davis Alyssa Cooper Tristan Miller Zackary Bergeron	19 Dillon Brown LeAnn Underwood Megan Smith Brown Herbert Poe	25 Paige Smith Rodney Mitchell Jackson Jones Jack Dutton	6 Craig & Katie Smith Bret & Taylor Johnson
	13 Andrea Kirby Hayden Kirby Linda Hawthorne Irelynn Walsh Maddox Jones	20 Alexis Manifold Jessica McKenzie Susan Elliott Elli Stone Joyce Tate Kenzlee Callahan	26 Mackenzie Willingham Justin Blansit James Smothers Glenda Kirby Warren Baggett Debra Cash Barbie Red Kim Cash Manning	7 Jonathan & Emily Bowman-Miller
	14 Ann Nelson Madi Gregory Logan McGee Raymond Evans	21 Lisa Crow Katie Villarreal Desiree Cash Jackson Mann	27 Patti Carden James Tubberville Ethan Webb Ava Tate Nolan Tate Kevin Lacey	8 Wayne & Angie Miller Chris Carmichael & Pat Parmelee
		22 Sandy Blalock Caitlin Kirby Ryan Pridmore Heather Cyrus Kathy Pritchett	28 Richard Barkley Tracy Cartwright Joey Smith	10 Alan & Beth Hawkins Storm & Leanna Kurts
		23 Terry Pangle Adrienne Guice Nathan Baggett Ronald Baggett Amelia Stott Bradley Stutt Chrissie Baker Holder		15 Doug & Karen Powell Keith & Dawn Langston Shane & Valerie Burt
				16 Preston & Amy Kirby
				17 Casey & Jessica Battles
				18 Chad & Amber Smith
				20 Jeremy & Lindsay Webb
				May 23 – Bradley & Rita Stutt
				24 Wesley & Tammy Frost Stacy & Karen Smith
				26 Soni & Sheila Larock Ray & Bobbie Zachary
				28 Adam & Wendy Haynes Easton & Anna Bailey
				29 Johnny & JoAnn Bain
				30 Tommy & Cindy Harrison
				31 Jimmy & Adele Phillips Kyle & Hannah Carden



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Community Calendar

Mentone Town Council meets the 2nd Tuesday every month at 5pm at Mentone Arts Center.

Mentone's Planning Commission meets the 1st Wed. every month at 5pm at Town Hall.

Valley Head Town Council meets monthly on the 1st Monday at 6pm at Town Hall.

Hammondville Town Council work sessions are held monthly on the 1st Tues.. at 5pm at Town Hall. Council meetings are held on the 1st Thurs. every month at 6pm in the Fire Hall.

The North Lookout Mountain Fire Protection District Board meets the 3rd Monday of every month at 7pm.

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Streamside Protection

by Angie Shugart

The biggest threat to Little River’s water quality is land development and forestry practices. There have been a lot of changes along the riverbanks that are not good for water quality. When landowners clear cut all the way to the banks, it is devastating to

the river’s ecosystem and contributes to the degradation of water quality. Over the years, I have studied how low-impact development practices lessen the impacts of erosion from runoff and I encourage landowners to be responsible stewards of this amazing watershed.

The unique geological makeup of Lookout Mountain creates Little River, one of the only rivers in the world that flows along a plateau. The Little River Watershed covers over 200 square miles of Lookout Mountain, with 50 square miles in northwest Georgia and the rest in northeast Alabama before the river flows into Weiss Lake on the Coosa River.

Little River is a sanctuary to several rare plants and animals, such as the Green Pitcher Plant, the Kral’s water plantain, and the blue shiner fish. Aquatic plants are extremely vulnerable due to siltation from the disturbance of the watershed for residential or silviculture purposes. These activities contribute to water quality degradation by increasing stream turbidity and siltation from erosion. Exceptional water quality is vital to the health of the extensive watershed.

Landowners and home builders are encouraged to implement best management practices to protect nearby streams and Little River. Citizens can help take an active role in protecting Little River through environmentally sound streambank restoration.

The Nature of Streams

A healthy stream provides habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife species and aquatic insects. Plants and animals inhabiting a healthy stream create a delicate balance that affects water quality, which in turn directly impacts humans.

Little River is a dynamic living resource that moves within its channel and floodplain and adapts to natural and human-induced changes within its environment. By learning about the forces that affect Little River, we can better protect or rehabilitate it.

The floodplain is the area of land covered by materials deposited by the river when it floods. These areas contain nutrient-rich, flood-deposited soil and riparian vegetation. Floodplains often contain wetlands, which help absorb floodwater and prevent runoff. Wetland plants trap and filter sediment and microbes on plant roots and break down pollutants. Wetlands are nature’s filtering system.

The movement of water in the stream and against opposing banks creates riffles, runs, and pools. Riffles are found in shallow areas where the water receives oxygen as it bubbles over rocks, providing an oxygen-rich environment for fish and macroinvertebrates. Rocks in riffles provide spawning beds for fish and trap organic matter that provides food. In the muddy bottoms of Little River, snags and fallen trees serve a purpose similar to riffle rocks. Pools provide deep water sections where large fish live, as well as burrowing macroinvertebrates such as mayflies and dragonflies. The straight section between riffles is a run—an important passageway for fish.

Little River is dynamic. Material erodes from one side of the riverbank and is deposited as sand bars, which move and change shape as water flows and velocity changes. You may notice sandbars forming or changing position when there is a large amount of sediment in the water during floods. Riverbanks with vegetation are

more likely to be stable and not erode.

Aquatic plants in Little River and along its banks provide important habitats for aquatic insects, as well as food and shelter for fish. They also oxygenate the water and help absorb and filter pollutants. A healthy river has a variety of aquatic habitats, such as riffles, runs, pools, overhanging vegetation, submerged roots, snags and trees, leaf packs, and aquatic plants. Alterations in the river through removal of in-stream and streambank vegetation removes these critical habitats.

The Role of Erosion

Little River formed its channel by erosion and the deposition of sediments in bars onto its floodplain. In healthy rivers and streams, there is a balance between sediment erosion and sediment deposition. Problems arise when that balance is skewed by changes in the watershed landscape, such as clearing forested land, which increases the runoff of water and soil. This adds sediment to the river and causes changes in shape and depth, which leads to other problems.

Sedimentation from river and streambank erosion create nonpoint source pollution. High levels of sediment in Little River can suffocate fish, smother spawning beds, kill aquatic insects, and degrade water quality. Sediment also blocks the sunlight needed by aquatic plants and it can contain pollutants, such as pesticides and fertilizers that have absorbed into soil particles. Land disturbances in the Little River watershed come from construction and forestry. The level of impact can be prevented when proper erosion control measures are implemented.



Little River – Photo courtesy of David Haynes

The Role of Vegetation

Vegetation along the river and stream banks provides a vital habitat for aquatic and semi-aquatic animals and is important for bank stability and as food for wildlife. Trees and woody vegetation draw water from the river, helping to dewater the banks and improve their stability. In addition, roots that hang from the riverbank provide places for fish and other animals to hide from predators. Tree roots growing out of the water also creates eddies and ripples that help oxygenate the water. Leaves falling from trees provide food for insect larva known as “shredders,” which eat decaying leaves. Finally, trees and shrubs provide shade for the river and keep the water cool. Cool water holds more dissolved oxygen.

Rainwater picks up pollutants as it flows over land and into the river or stream. When water flows through a vegetated area rather than bare soil or pavement, the vegetation slows the velocity of the runoff water and decreases erosion. Vegetated areas along the river are referred to as “buffer zones.” Forested buffer zones are the most effective means of pollution prevention because the forest floor’s organic layer, known as “duff,” traps and filters the runoff water. Microorganisms that live on tree roots also help break down and take up pollutants. In addition, vegetation with deep root systems help filter polluted groundwater. For the past several decades, buffer zones have been recommended in private and public landscapes, and agricultural and silvicultural practices. We recommend that the vegetated buffer zone along Little River and its tributaries should be at least 50 feet wide. This allows the best management of filtration and will not disturb habitat.

Angie Shugart is a co-founder of Little River Waterkeeper.



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“The Speckled Beauty”

A Book Review by Betsy Dillbeck

When I first moved to Fort Payne in 2015, my sister sent me a subscription to *Southern Living*, perhaps thinking I could use it for some up-to-date information on Southern decor, recipes, and culture. Although I greatly appreciated the gift, I believe my sister had forgotten that I lived for nine years in McCormick County, South Carolina. As editor of their county newspaper, I had more than sufficient exposure to “Deep South.” I had also been introduced to the writings of Lewis Grizzard, who wrote a column for the *Atlanta Constitution* and whose writings were mostly rehashes and snippets of history of the “War of Northern Aggression,” as I learned Southerners referred to the Civil War.

As I flipped through the pages of my new magazine, on the back page was a monthly column by Rick Bragg. In some way I thought the name was familiar but I couldn’t place his writings. I was immediately in love with his way of presenting the foils and foibles of Southern rural life.

When I received my magazine each month, I turned to the back page and read his column before I started at the beginning to thumb through the rest of the issue. I was a true fan and rated all my forthcoming adventures here in Alabama to his wonderful view of Alabama and Georgia folks and their lives.

I knew he had written some books, yet I had not consciously put them on my reading list. But, for my 82nd birthday, a friend of mine, knowing how much I loved to read, and of my love for dogs, gave me a copy of Rick Bragg’s “The Speckled Beauty.” I immediately delved into the pages. It turned out to be one of those books you don’t want to end, and you’re sort of afraid you’ll be crying by the time you reach the final pages.

In his own words, “Speck is not a good boy, he is a terrible boy, a defiant, self-destructive, often malodorous boy, a grave robber and a screen door moocher who spends his days playing chicken with the FedEx man, picking fights with livestock, and rolling in donkey manure, and his nights howling at the moon. He has been that way since the moment he appeared on the ridgeline behind our house.”

But, no worries. It’s a book that mirrors his columns, a book of heartfelt smiles and a few tears. It is filled with the joys of owning a rescued dog where you can only



wonder what the dog went through before he came to you. How did his beloved “Speck” get to be so terrible, ornery, and flaunting of the rules of behavior for a “good dog,” always testing the boundaries of Bragg’s patience and love?

Better still, it isn’t just the dog’s story, but how Bragg’s family, mostly his Mom and his brother Sam, were drawn into the daily life dealing with his “terrible dog.” Bragg was living outside Jacksonville, Alabama, with his mother at the time, and was also dealing with some health issues. Was the dog a comfort or nuisance? You can decide.

It seemed to me, the speckled dog eventually brought out the best in Bragg, his brother Sam, and his mother. All of the events with his dog are told in Bragg’s own inimitable style of writing, allowing the reader to intimately experience every aspect of the tale.

I have since read “Ava’s Man” and have ordered “All Over but The Shoutin.” “Ava’s Man” is a biography of Bragg’s grandfather, Charlie Bundrum, during the Great Depression and into the 1950s. Although he did not know his grandfather (he was born after his death), he was so impressed by the stories that emerged from his family and the equal silence about his life, that he interviewed his family until he put together this incredible story of a “real” Southern man, with all his strengths, and all his faults. It’s an incredible story that he fashioned from the memories of the people who knew his grandfather.

Bragg’s mother and her family lived not far from the Mentone area. There was a place called Curryville, not far from Rome, Georgia, where they lived a few times, and his family always rented a small house on the outskirts of Rome, Jacksonville, or Gadsden, wherever there was work to be had. He recalls these homes as being in “the foothills of Appalachia,” almost always on a dirt road, nestled between a ridge and a valley. His vivid description of the terrain and the lifestyles of his family and neighbors mirror those of so much of rural northeast Alabama and Georgia.

Reading his monthly columns will give you a small taste of his humor, but reading his books will take you on a trip through the rural South that will forever change your outlook on Southern culture, especially if you have never lived in Rick Bragg’s Alabama and Georgia of his youth.



“I can not warm you if your heart be cold.” This inscription graces the fireplace of Stoneridge Cottage, a historic stone cottage near Brow Park owned by Liz and Jerome Stephens. Jerome’s grandfather built the cottage in 1940.

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178 FEET OF RIVER FRONTAGE! The emerald green waters of the West Fork are perfect for kayaking and swimming! This property is ideal for your forever home or vacation home! Old road bed is already in place for your driveway! \$199,900. #1826674